

THE DOG FAMILY



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THE DOG FAMILY



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Wolves, jackals and foxes are all members of the dog family. They are found on all continents except Antarctica. They live in forests, steppes, mountains, plains and deserts.

The animals of this family have long, well-shaped legs, and their claws are strong and blunt. They can all run fast, some reaching speed of sixty-five kilometers an hour!

The fur of these animals is thick and various shades of gray or red. Some of the animals are striped. One of the African jackals is called the side-striped jackal. Some are spotted. The African hunting dog has black, white and yellow spots. This is the only wild animal with fur of three colors.

The smallest member of the dog family is the fennec. It is about the size of a kitten. The largest is the wolf. Big wolves can weigh up to eighty kilograms!

This book will tell you about animals which are close relatives of the dog.



All dogs, both large and small, descended from the wolf. The wolf is the strongest member of the dog family. Even with a goat or sheep on its back it can run so fast that it is hard to catch up with it even on a fast-running horse. The wolf has very strong jaws. It can crush large bones easily.

Wolves do not only live in the forest. They also like great plains and fields. They usually hunt at night, but in areas where there are no people, they also hunt in the daytime.

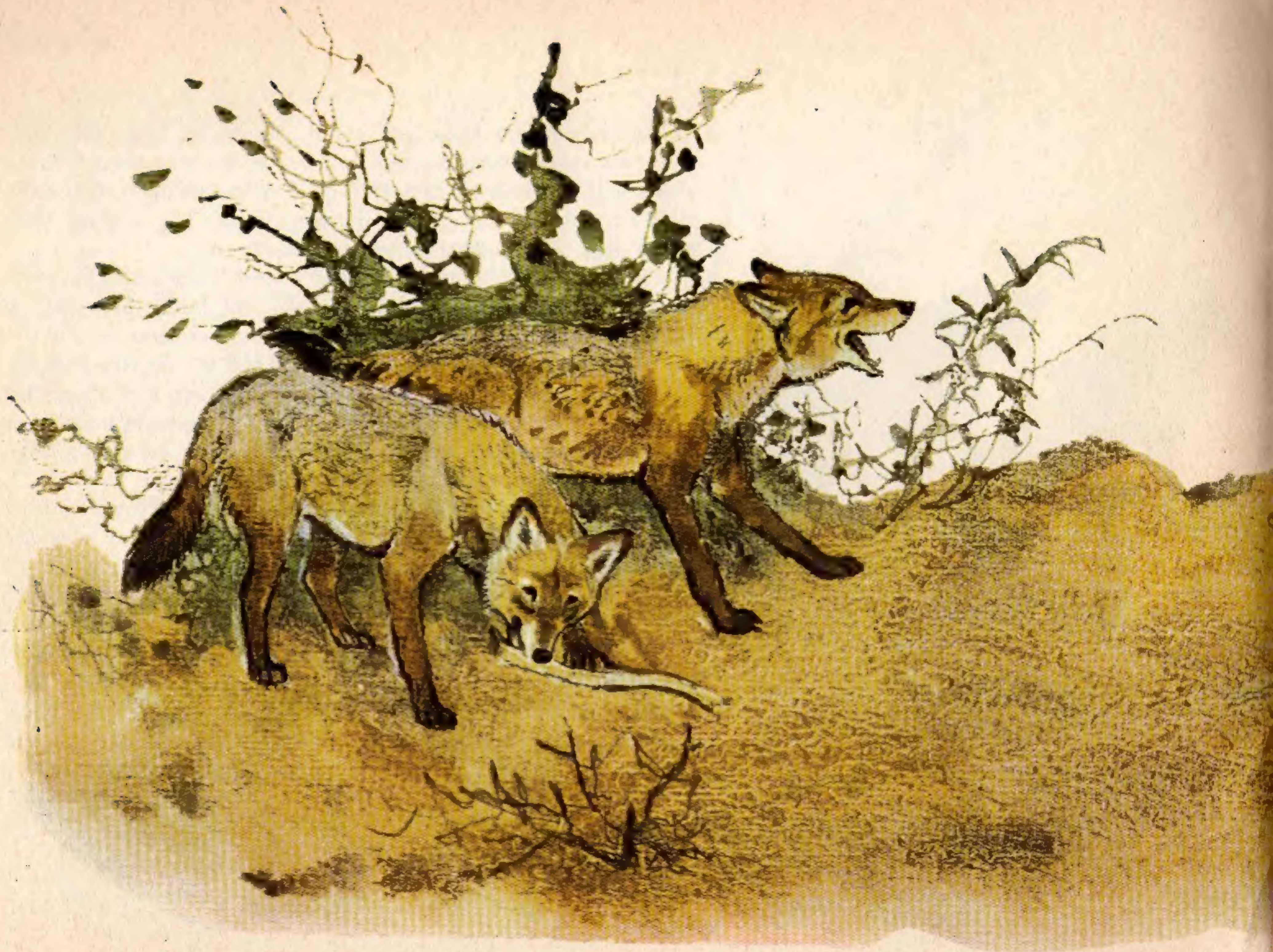
They say a wolf lives by its feet, and this is true. Sometimes a wolf will run sixty kilometers in one day in search of food. But it does not always find it. It is difficult for an animal in the wild to find food. That is why a wolf gorges itself when it does kill a large animal. It can eat ten kilograms of meat at one time.

But a wolf can also go without food. Sometimes it has nothing to eat for a whole week. Once a wolf hid from hunters in a safe spot, and it stayed there for seventeen days without eating!

In the autumn and winter wolves gather in packs. In the spring they pair off. Somewhere in the roots of a fallen tree or in a den the mother wolf has her babies. She usually has a litter of five to seven cubs, but she can have as many as ten or as little as two. During this time she does not leave the den. The father wolf brings food to her. He takes good care of her and will always see that she has enough to eat, even if he has to go hungry.

By the end of the summer the wolf cubs are big enough to go hunting with their parents.





THE COMMON JACKAL

Though the jackal looks much like a wolf it is not a fearsome animal. It is only half the size of a wolf.

In the Soviet Union jackals are found only in the Caucasus Mountains and Central Asia, where it is warm. They do not like the cold.

Jackals often live near villages and towns. They watch to see what is left unguarded, and steal it at the first opportunity. They take hens from the coop. If watermelons are ripe in the field they will eat them. If the corn is ready to be picked, they will steal it too. And they love to nibble sweet grapes from vineyards.

They are very tricky. If a jackal wants to catch a crow or a magpie it will lie in the road and play dead. When the bird sees the jackal it flies down to peck at what it thinks is a dead animal. The tricky jackal then jumps up and that is the end of the bird.

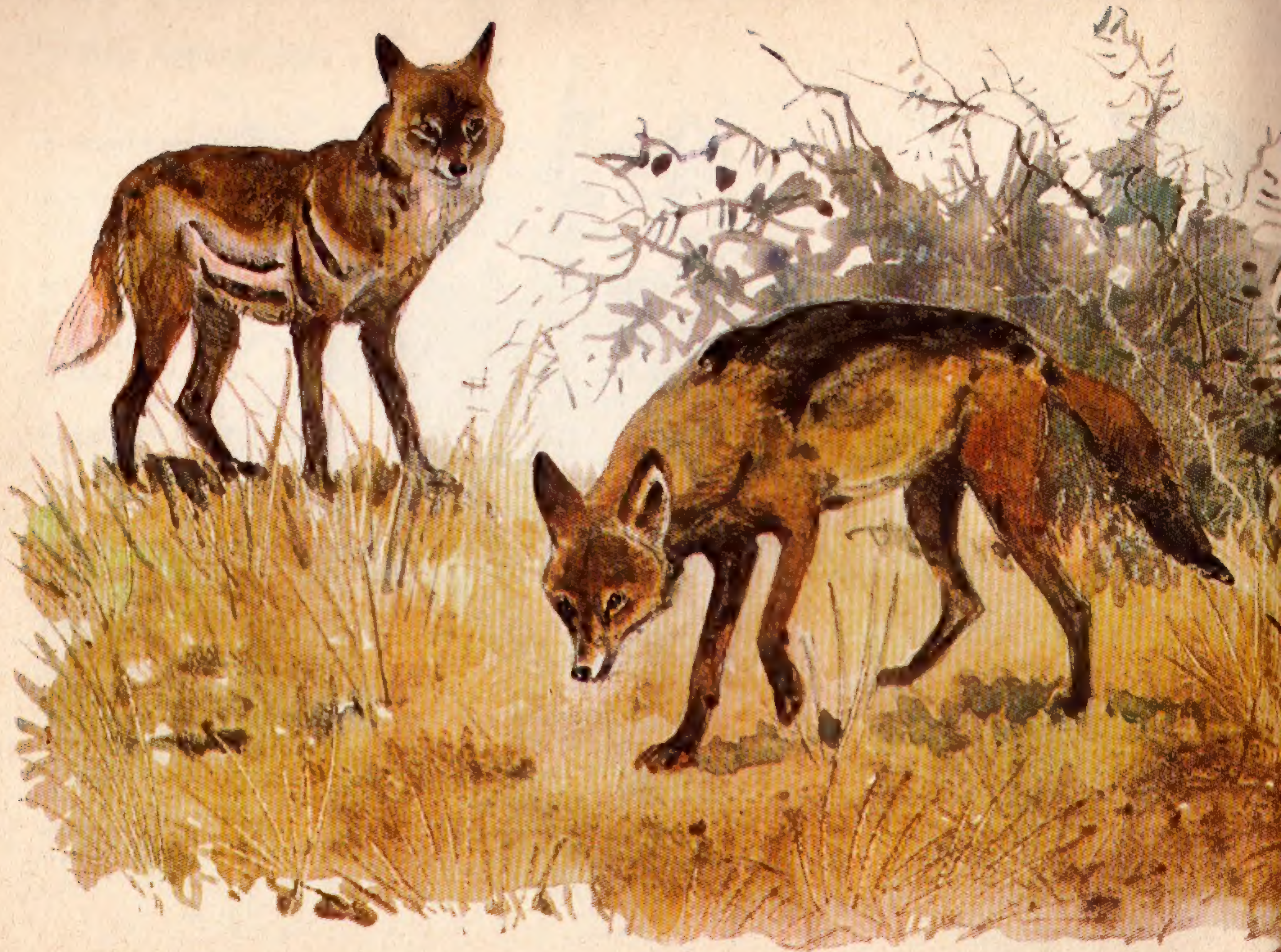
Jackals love to live along rivers and lakes. Since there is nothing to steal there jackals hunt for frogs, lizards and small rodents. They even eat locust.

In the autumn jackals gather in small packs. Then they sometimes risk attacking goats and sheep, because they feel braver in numbers.

In the spring the mother jackal has her young. She feeds them somewhere in thick bushes, or among the reeds, or even in burrows abandoned by badgers or porcupines. She usually has three to five babies, but can have as many as nine.

The little jackals grow fast, and in the autumn they leave their parents. By the following summer they have babies of their own.







THE BLACK-BACKED JACKAL

The black-backed jackal got its name from the silvery black stripe on its back. The fur covering the rest of its body is reddish-gray.

In the African plains you can find black-backed jackals in the same places where lions live. When lions go hunting, the jackals quietly follow. If the lion catches an antelope or a zebra, the jackals give a wild howl. This is their way of congratulating the lion on his success.

The jackals wait patiently while the lion eats its fill. As soon as it is finished and goes off to find a cool place to rest, the jackals fall on whatever is left. Lions do not touch jackals, but they seem to look down on them.

Black-backed jackals are good hunters themselves. When in packs they attack small antelopes, and can overpower a sheep and even a python if it is not very large. They creep up to flamingos when they are feeding peacefully in the shallows of a lake.

They also hunt in villages. They steal chickens and anything they come across that is good to eat. People do not like this. They shoot the jackals and make rugs of their beautiful hides.

In Africa there are two more kinds of jackals. One of them has light-colored stripes on its sides. This is the only striped animal in the dog family. The other is the Abyssinian red jackal which has long legs and a thin muzzle.



THE COYOTE

The coyote is also called the prairie wolf. It is the closest relative to the wolf, but is the size of a jackal.

These animals live in North America.

Like the jackal, the coyote is able to live near humans. They behave much the same as the jackal and search for food in garbage dumps and steal. What is more, they give concerts at night, but these are not very musical. They howl and yap, and no one can sleep.

But when the coyotes began to disappear, scientists realized that they are useful animals. They catch rats and other harmful rodents. Today coyotes are protected.

A mother and father coyote stay together all their lives. In the plains they usually make their home in a den. In the forest they behave strangely for a member of the dog family. They find a thick tree with a hollow. Then the mother coyote moves in, even if the hollow is a meter or a meter and a half off the ground. The father coyote brings food for her and for the pups.

But the strangest thing is what happens if there is no place for them to live. Then two mothers live in one den with their young, and everyone gets along. And if something happens to one of the mothers, the other will take care of the orphan pups as if they were her own.

When the pups are two months old their parents begin to teach them how to catch mice, rabbits, birds and frogs. By the time the summer ends their lessons are over. Now they are on their own. Young coyotes roam very far. Sometimes they travel over one hundred kilometers from the place where they were born.





THE ARCTIC FOX

The Arctic fox is one of the world's best polar explorers. It lives on the northern plains of Asia, Europe and North America. From there it wanders far to the north to the frozen Arctic.

In the winter the Arctic fox is white. It is hard to see them against the snow. Some have winter fur that is bluish, gray or even black. These are called blue foxes. Their pelts are highly valued.

In the summer the Arctic fox's fur is grayish-brown. Only the fur on its belly is light. Its summer coat is not as pretty, but it blends well with the color of the northern plain after the snow has melted.

These foxes love to dig burrows and they dig a new one every year. Otherwise they would have problems. Where do they hide from the cold? In a burrow. Where do they raise their young? Also in a burrow. Often these foxes have to make do behind some rock or among hummocks. You see, they cannot dig burrows everywhere. It is impossible to dig in rocky soil or in a swamp.

The Arctic fox sometimes has more than ten pups in her litter. It would be very hard for the mother to feed and care for them all if the father fox did not help. He brings food. If an enemy approaches the litter, he defends his family the best he can. He yelps to draw the intruder's attention, and then leads it away from the pups.

These foxes roam the northern plains both day and night. They catch northern rodents like lemmings, mice and hares. They eat fish if they manage to catch them. And they follow polar bears to eat their leftovers, just like the jackals follow lions.

If the Arctic fox has more food than it needs, it buries it and packs down the earth with its muzzle so no one will guess what is hidden there. It never forgets where it has buried the food, and will come back later to eat it.





People used to say that one red fox can trick seven wolves. This is not true. Even though there are many fairy tales and stories about clever foxes, the wolf is cleverer and trickier.

Red foxes feed mainly on mice. They are wonderful at catching these rodents which cause farmers so much trouble. On a good day a fox can catch fifty mice.

Foxes only hunt wood-grouse, hares and hazel-grouse when they cannot find mice. Sometimes they will even attack a young deer. They are not fussy eaters and will eat anything they come across. They like grasshoppers, June beetles, lizards, earthworms and snails. And they love bilberries, raspberries, grapes and plums.

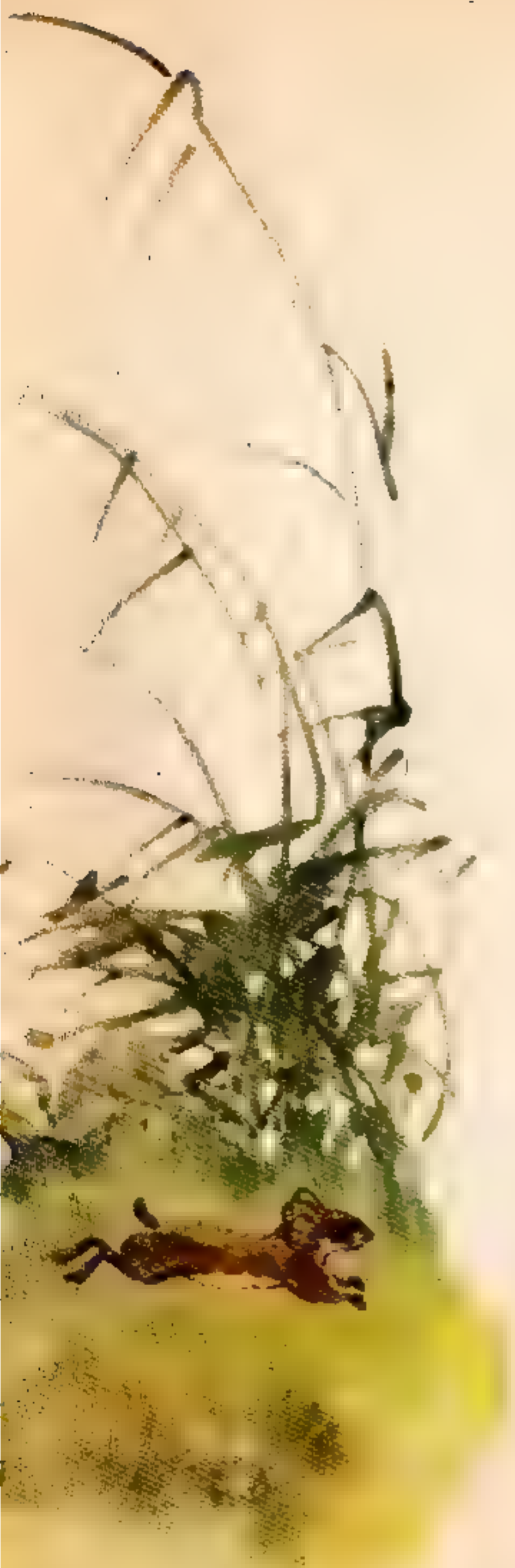
Foxes only kill for food and never harm other animals without cause. They may move into a badger's burrow and live there with the badger. The burrow has dozens of entrances and exits, and there is plenty of room for others, too. Sometimes polecats, wildcats, owls, and otters all live there peacefully.

And foxes are not capricious animals either. They can live in barren plains, or in the mountains, or in forests, or in the desert. You can even find them in parks in large cities. And they are known in Europe, Asia, America and Northern Africa.

Have you ever seen a newborn fox pup?

They are very tiny, no bigger than a mole, with brownish fur. For the first month the mother fox only feeds them milk. Then they crawl out of their burrow and play near the entrance for hours. They are very happy little animals. The father fox brings them food, but he does not bring it right up to the burrow. He puts the food nearby. The mother fox finds it and gives it to the pups.

It is surprising how fast the parents teach the pups to hunt. It takes about two weeks! The young foxes do not stay with their parents for long.



THE RACCOON DOG

This animal has short legs and is shaggy like the badger. It has whiskers like the lynx. And it hibernates all winter like the bear.

In the Soviet Far East where these animals live they are called Ussuriisk raccoon. But the proper name is raccoon dog.

Zoologists in the Soviet Union decided to move some of these animals west. Now they live near Moscow, in the Ukraine, and in the Baltic republics. They have even wandered into neighboring countries, and can be found in Poland and Finland. They do not like to stay in one place. They move slowly but can cover large distances. They like bushes near rivers and lakes, and sparse forests.

They eat different things like mice, frogs, lizards, fish, insects and birds. They also destroy many birds' nests. They like berries and fruit.

Like the badger, the raccoon dog is good at digging burrows. But in Europe, in its new homeland, it does not waste time doing this. If it finds suitable crevices among the rocks, or another animal's old den, or a hollow spot under the roots of a fallen tree it makes its home there. Why spend time digging a burrow when it will soon move on?

The raccoon dog has many pups, sometimes as many as nineteen. Both the mother and father care for the young.



THE BUSH DOG

The bush dog has very short legs. Its body is very long. Its ears are small and its tail and muzzle are stubby and look like they have been cut off. It is a very strange-looking animal.

The bush dog is only found in South America. It prefers to live in bushes or under the twisted roots of the huge trees in the tropical forests. Other animals would get caught in the branches or roots but the bush dog, although short-legged like a dachshund, is very agile. It can wriggle its way into any opening.

During the day the bush dog sleeps in its den. At night they come out to hunt in packs. They usually go after South American rodents which are related to the guinea pig.

These rodents are good swimmers. When they need to escape from an animal they run to the water and dive in. But they do not always manage to get away. The bush dog can catch them in the water, too.

The bush dog returns to the litter with a catch. The pups wait for it anxiously, squealing hungrily.

The adult bush dogs squeal like puppies when they talk to one another in the forest undergrowth. But if one of them notices an enemy it will growl and spit like a cat. This way it warns the others of danger.

There are very few bush dogs in zoos around the world. It is a very picky animal and cannot live long under unfamiliar conditions.





THE MANED WOLF



Now we will learn about the wild dog with the longest legs. It lives in South America on plains with bushes and sparse trees.

The maned wolf is a beautiful animal. Its fur is reddish-brown and it has a white spot on its chest. It looks like it has black stockings on its legs. On its neck and back it has a small black mane. Its muzzle looks like that of a fox. And it behaves much like a fox, too. In South America it is called the big fox.

The maned wolf is the tallest animal in the dog family. It is almost one meter high. But it is not the strongest or the heaviest. It only weighs about twenty kilograms. People who live in areas with maned wolves think that they attack calves and colts. So they kill them. Few maned wolves remain today. But there is no need to kill this wolf. It is not harmful. It is skittish, and hunts alone at night. It runs across the plains catching a lizard, frog or rodent, or enjoying a banana, or munching on nuts or sugar cane. To catch a mouse it digs the ground, but it uses its teeth instead of its front feet.

Though the maned wolf has long legs, it can not run fast for long. It gets tired. A good horse can quickly outrun it. But you should see how it jumps. It leaps over a tall bush from a standing position and disappears in the thicket. This is how it usually escapes from hunters.

The maned wolf usually has only two or three cubs, and on rare occasions as many as five. The babies are black and their legs are short. They live with their mother until they are as tall as she is.



THE AFRICAN HUNTING DOG

There are no wolves in Africa. But you could call the wild dogs who live there the wolves of Africa. They act very much like wolves. They hunt in packs. Sometimes these packs are small, but sometimes they are made up of hundreds of dogs. These fast-moving animals race across the plains barking and raising clouds of dust. They can run sixty kilometers an hour to catch their prey. It usually takes them no more than five minutes to bring down an antelope or zebra.

African hunting dogs do not hunt in the daytime when it is hot. They sleep in the shade of trees or play. But in the evening or early morning they trot along, noses to the ground, sniffing and listening with cocked ears.

At this time it is dangerous for a small gazelle to run into the pack. Even a large antelope with long, sharp horns which even lions fear, should be careful. The lion himself prefers to stay out of the dogs' way if they are particularly hungry. The dogs might tear it apart, especially if the lion is old or very young.

The hunting dogs have a division of labor. Some hunt while others care for the pups and guard the den. The hunter dogs bring meat for the puppies and their guardians as well.

The African hunting dogs are the only spotted animals in the dog family. They have black, yellow and white spots. Their markings are different, and no two dogs are alike.





Do you remember how Mowgli helped his friends the gray wolves fight the red wolves?

Red wolves are also called red dogs. People in different countries call them by different names. The red wolf lives in China, India, on the islands of Java and Sumatra and in the mountains of Siberia, the Pamirs and the Tien Shan Mountains.

Red wolves cannot run as fast as the African hunting dog. They do not catch their prey by running after it. Instead a pack of red wolves will track a goat, wild boar, deer or wild ram for hours. When the animal tires, the pack closes in on it...

They say that even a tiger is in trouble if it meets up with a pack of red wolves.

When the Himalayan bear senses red wolves, it hurries away. And if the scent is very strong, which means the wolves are very close, the bear quickly climbs a tree.

The elephant is the only animal that can defend itself when alone from the savage attack of a red-wolf pack.

Red wolves never attack people. They do not come close to villages and towns, and they never kill livestock.

There are not many red wolves left. In the Soviet Union it is against the law to kill them.



THE CORSAC



The first time someone sees a corsac he usually thinks it is a tiny red fox.

And the corsac does look like a small red fox. But many scientists think that it is more closely related to the Arctic fox than the red fox.

The corsac lives in Asia. In the Soviet Union they are found only in the south-east, from the Lower Volga area to Lake Baikal. But long ago the corsac was well known in the European part of Russia, too. They served as house pets, taking the place of dogs.

When tame it is a very funny animal. It is affectionate and trusting with its owner, and likes to play. It is very agile, and can even climb bushes and trees. But most important, they catch rats. This is important because some cats cannot overpower a rat.

In the wild the corsac is completely different. It is cautious. During the day it remains hidden in its burrow.

It almost never digs its own burrow. And there is no need because it can almost always find one left by a badger, a fox or a marmot.

Like the coyote, the corsac can also have problems finding a place to live. Sometimes two mothers and their litters share one burrow. This is fine if each mother has two pups. But if they each have eleven? This happens sometimes. Somehow the two families always work things out.

The pups do not stay with their parents long. They leave to go out on their own in the autumn.

THE FENNEC

The fennec is the smallest wild animal in the dog family. But it has the biggest ears. It is about the size of a kitten, but its ears would fit a large sheep dog.

These marvelous little animals live in the hottest place on earth, in the Sahara Desert.

Fennecs hide from the burning rays of the sun in deep, cool burrows during the day. Only in the evening do they come out all together, as if at a command, and sit quietly near their burrows. They wait until it cools off completely. If the sun is still quite hot, they lie down and cover their heads with their bushy tails, using them like umbrellas.

At last the long-awaited coolness arrives. The little fennec pricks up its long ears. There was a noise. The animal cautiously crawls to the spot where it heard a lizard rustling along the sand or a locust jump. A desert lark makes very little noise when it moves in its sleep, but the sensitive ears of the fennec can detect that too. It knows where the bird has hidden. One leap and the bird is in its jaws.

Fennecs gather at night to drink at rivers and lakes. Some come from far away. They all want to drink, though a fennec can do for days without water.

The fennecs have their tiny young early in the African spring.



THE BAT-EARED FOX

There are no fennecs in Southern Africa, but there is another animal with large ears and a sharp sense of hearing. This is the bat-eared fox. Its ears are almost as long as the fennec's, though it is twice the fennec's size.

But the amazing thing about this animal is its teeth. It has fifty! The only land animal with more teeth is the anteater of Australia. Its tiny teeth work like a grater on termites, ants and other insects.

Like the anteater, the bat-eared fox eats insects. But it also hunts for mice, lizards and birds. It also eats fruit and berries.

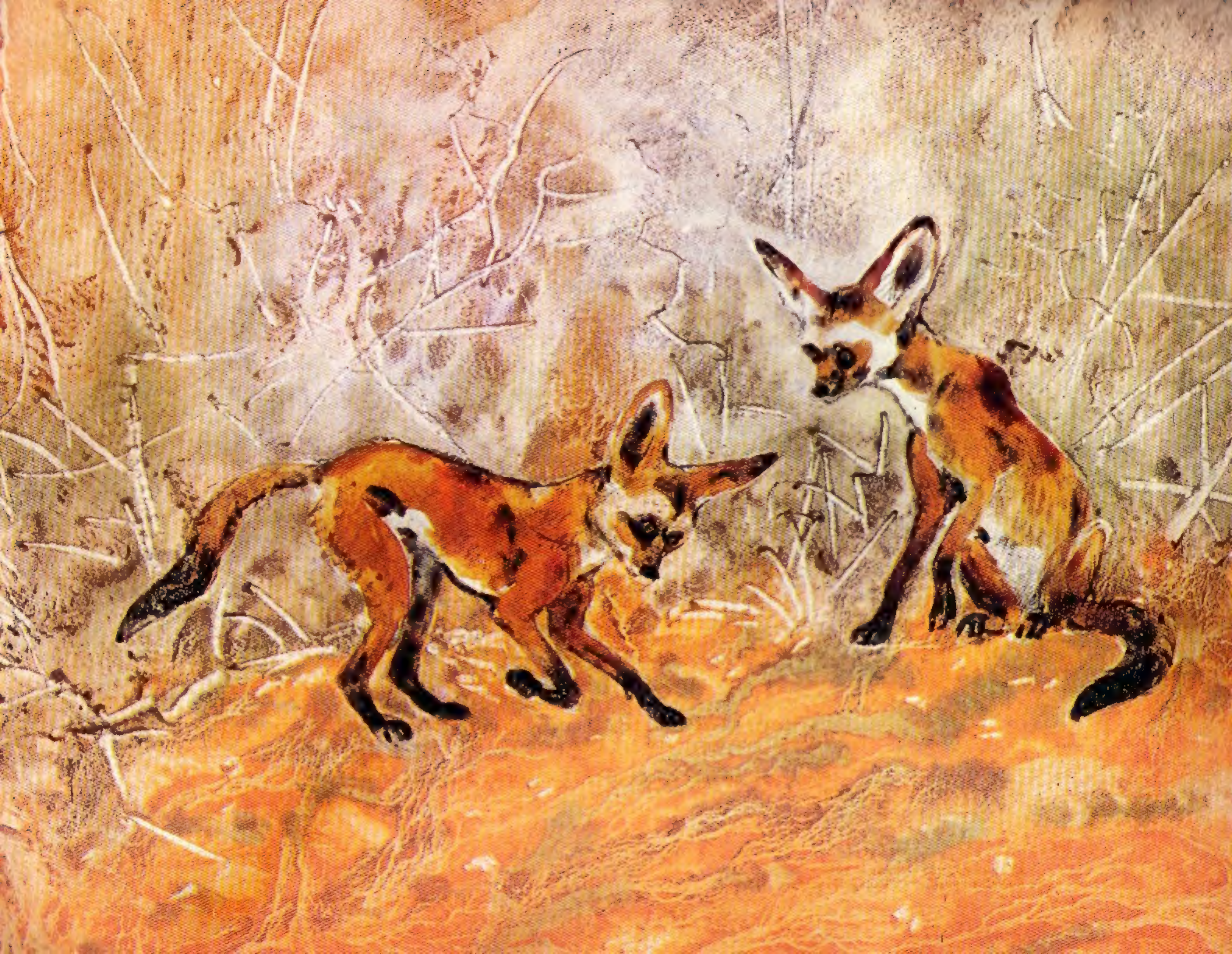
This fox is very skittish. You will rarely see one in the daytime. It hides in its burrow, or in thick bushes, or among the rocks on cliffs. It hunts at night.

Bat-eared foxes never gather in packs. They are either alone or in pairs.

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In this book you have learned about fourteen members of the dog family. These are the better known animals. There are a total of thirty-five members of the dog family. When you are older you can read about them in other books about animals.





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И. Акимовский
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На английском языке



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